

From: Brian Wood
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 3:21pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

The proposed final settlement between the United States and Microsoft Corporation is a terrible blow to the information technology industry. Microsoft, a company found guilty of violating U.S. anti-trust law, has held fast and diluted what's left of justice in this country into a settlement that provides a vehicle for continuing their monopoly.

Knowledge is power, even more so in the I.T. industry. Microsoft has demonstrated time and time again, that it will withhold documentation, embrace and extend protocols and standards, to keep its competitors incompatible and in the dark (Caldera DR-DOS and the Kerberos implementation in Windows 2000 are two examples that come to mind). Section J of the settlement specifically provides Microsoft the ability to withhold the inner-workings of its operating system and other products from anyone. Where's the settlement part here? This allows Microsoft to go on, as they always have, documenting only what they feel like, when they feel like. This keeps other companies and groups (such as Wine, the windows emulator project for Linux) in the dark on certain portions of the Windows API, and prevents Wine from ever becoming a fully compatible emulator, and thus a viable alternative to the Windows operating system. Microsoft should be REQUIRED to document ALL portions of its operating system, from the APIs to the communications protocols. Only when competitors can produce compatible alternatives, can a competitive marketplace be re-established.

Microsoft must not be allowed to continue to withhold information from their competitors (including non-profit organizations, open source projects, etc). To allow them to continue to withhold information is no settlement at all, but a protection of their existing monopoly.